

Making Sense of...

The IDHE National Report: *Democracy Counts 2018*

Overview:

- IDHE releases a report on college student voting patterns the year after every U.S. national election. *Democracy Counts 2018* is the latest report, and it provides a look at the 2018 midterm elections.
- The data in *Democracy Counts 2018* comes from IDHE's National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), an ongoing project that colleges and universities choose to join. As part of their participation, institutions receive a free summary report of voting patterns on their campus. The national report aggregates all of the 1,000+ participating campus results and analyzes patterns across the country. The report represents results from 10 million college students, more than half of all current U.S. students.
- This year's report contains several major findings, including:
 - The overall college student turnout rate doubled in 2018, rising to 40.3% from 19.3% in the last comparable election (2014 midterm), an increase of 21 percentage points.
 - IDHE calculates student voting rates for each participating NSLVE campus. The average across institutions also doubled in 2018, rising to 39.1% from 19.7% in 2014.
 - Women in college vote at higher rates than men, a trend that held true in 2018.
 - While every student racial/ethnic group voted at higher rates in 2018 than in 2014, the largest rate increase was among Hispanic students. The Hispanic student rate jumped 22.5 percentage points from 14% in 2014 to 36.5% in 2018.
 - Older voters historically vote at higher rates than their younger counterparts, but the turnout gap between students over 30 and those under 22 dropped from 22.3 percentage points in 2014 to 16.9 in 2018. In other words, the youngest eligible voters on campus are closing the age gap.

Readings:

- [Democracy Counts 2018: Increased Student and Institutional Engagement](#), IDHE
- [NSLVE Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Using Your NSLVE Reports](#)

Questions for discussion:

- What is higher education's role in democracy? What should it be?
- How do the findings in *Democracy Counts 2018* differ or align with your expectations for student political participation? Is it important for college students to participate in electoral politics? Why or why not?
- How does your area of study relate to issues of public importance?
- What do you see as the major issues of equity at play in American political participation?
- How is voting a reflection of political learning?
- Where do you see "political learning" taking place at your institution? Where do you see opportunity for increased civic and political engagement?
- What do you see as the most significant findings of *Democracy Counts 2018*?